**Good News, Bad News, Who Knows?**

**Opening to the Truth of Constant Change**

**By Heather Sundberg, Mountain Stream Teacher**

There is an archetypal story from ancient China, which has served me well as a reminder of the equanimity and openness to the mystery required to face the constant changes of life with non-reactivity and compassion.

A farmer acquires a horse to plow his fields. However, the horse soon runs away. A neighbor says, "That's bad news."

The farmer replies, "Good news, bad news, who knows?"

The horse comes back and brings another horse with him.

‘Good news’, you might say. But the farmer’s response was the same, “Good news, bad news, who knows?”

The farmer gives the second horse to his son, who rides it and is thrown, breaking his leg. Neighbors console the farmer, “Sorry for your bad news.” Yet still the farmer replies, “Good news, bad news, who knows?”

A week later, the emperor's army takes every able-bodied young man to fight in a war. The farmer's son is spared. The farmer’s response?

“Good news, bad news, who knows?”

Although there are certain things which most would agree are ‘good news’ or ‘bad news’, when we look a little deeper we discover that much is open to interpretation. Which is very good news ☺, because it means we have *a choice* about how to respond to our ever-changing world.

Three Ways to Practice with Changing Conditions:

1. Grieving Change: When something happens, and for us it’s ‘bad news’, this is a time to acknowledge the loss, to bring in compassion for ourselves and others. Noticing changes in the face of difficulty can be a wonderful refuge, as we remember to say “This too shall pass”. We can also notice whether we have a habit to think of change in general as ‘difficult’ or not.

2. Celebrating Change: When something happens, and for us it’s ‘good news’, this is a time to celebrate the beautiful sense of possibility and aliveness, which the messenger of change can provide, without attachment to further future outcomes.

3. Practicing with the Flow of Change in Direct Experience: Meditation practice invites us into the direct experience of change, moment by moment. Sometimes amazing, sometimes completely un-nerving, this direct experience has the power to transform how we relate to reality, becoming ever-more wise to experience. Enjoy being curious about how change manifests in your body and mind the next time you meditate!